

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-07
TRSE-00 SSM-03 /073 W
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P R 161615Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2248
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY EL AVIV
USMISSION USUN
USIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN PRESS WAFFLES OVER RECENT U.S. PRONOUNCEMENTS
ON DEFENSIBLE BORDERS

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN MEDIA INITIALLY STRUCK BALANCED TONE IN
RESPONSE TO RECENT STATEMENTS ON DEFENSIBLE BORDERS AND OTHER
ME ISSUES BY PRESIDENT CARTER (SEE DAMASCUS 1689), BUT FOLLOW-
ING SPEECH BY PRESIDENT SADAT MEDIA SHIFTED TO THE ATTACK AS
DEMONSTRATED BY MARCH 15 AL-BAATH EDITORIAL ENTITLED, "PRES.
CARTER'S STATEMENTS DO NOT ENCOURAGE CNONTINUATION OF DIALGOUE."
TODAY'S COMMENTARY ON SUBJECT, HOWEVER, MILD IN TONE AND
STRESSES ARABS NOT DETERRED FROM DEALING WITH US IN SEARCH FOR
PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

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2. INITIAL CAUTION SHOWN IN REPORTING OF PRESIDENT
CARTER'S TWO PUBLIC STATEMENTS DEALING WITHCONCEPT OF
DEFENSIBLE/SECURE BORDERS IN ME PEACE SETTLEMENT SHIFTED TO
CRITICAL ATTACK WITH APPEARANCE FRONT PAGE AL-BAATH
EDITORIAL MARCH 15, ENTITLED "PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATE-
MENTS DO NOT ENCOURAGE CONTINUATION OF DIALOGUE."

WRITTEN BY SENIOR COUNCIL AMID AL-KHULI, EDITORIAL
OFUCSSED ON PRESIDENT'S USE OF TERM "DEFENSIBLE
BORDERS" WITHOUT MENTIONING SUBSEQUENT CLARIFICATION BY
USG SPOKESMEN.

3. KHULI CHARGED THAT "ONCE AGAIN AMERICAN OFFICIAL
STATEMENTS DIVERGE FROM DECLARED STANDS AND COMMITMENTS
ABOUT SINCERITY U.S. APPROACH TOWARDS JUST AND COMPREHENSIVE
SOLUTION OF ARAB-ZIONIST CONFLICT IN REGION." HE CLAIMED
SECRETARY'S STATEMENT JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE ON ME
FACT-FINDING MISSION "ANNOUNCING CONCEPTION
OF PEACE TOTALLY IN CONTRADICTION TO PRINCIPLES OF ANY
JUST PEACE" MARKED FIRST SUCH INCIDENT. THE SECOND
DECLARATION MADE BY CARTER HIMSELF WHEN HE AFFIRMED
"ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO DEFENSIBLE GEOGRAPHICAL BORDERS.
THESE BORDERS IN ZIONIST LOGIC ARE THE SECURE BORDERS
WHICH ISRAEL DEMANDS TO EVADE PEACE. NEW AFFIRMATION
CONSTITUTES ADOPTION OF ZIONIST POINT OF VIEW IN
CONFLICT, AND ITS DANGER LIES IN ITS TIMING IN FACT-
FINDING PROCESS."

4. KHULI RESTATED FAMILIAR ARAB ARGUMENT THAT DEFENSIBLE
BORDERS IS AN IRRELEVANT CONCEPT IN DAY OF
MISSILES AND OTHER LONG RANGE WEAPONRY, CITING THE
OCTOBER WAR AS PROOF OF HIS THESIS. HE CONTINUED BY
NOTING THAT ISRAEL NOT ARABS, CONTINUED TO EXPAND BEYOND
UN PROPOSED 1947 BORDERS AND ASKED RHETORICALLY,
"WHO THEN NEEDS THESE BORDERS, ISRAEL OR THE ARABS?" KHULI
FRETTERED THAT "AMERICAN POSITION NOT MOVING IN SAME DIRECTION AS
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COMMITMENTS UNDERTAKEN BY NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION
TO SEEK COMPREHENSIVE AND JUST SOLUTION FOR REGION." HE
CONCLUDED THAT LITTLE REAL DIFFERENCE EXISTS BETWEEN POSITION
OF DEMOCRATIC OR REPUBLICAN PARTIES TOWARDS ME SETTLEMENT
SINCE THEY ONLY SOUGHT SOLUTION OF CONFLICT AT ARAB EXPENSE.
ARABS PREPARED TO FIGHT 100 YEARS MORE RATHER THAN SACRIFICE
ONE INCH OF ARAB OCCUPIED LAND OR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, HE
DECLARED.

5. JUST IN CASE ANYONE MISSED THE POINT, AL-BAATH RAN SECOND
EDITORIAL ON SAME SUBJECT ON ITS INSIDE PAGES.
EDITORIAL VAGUELY CHARACTERIZED CARTER'S INITIATIVE
AS "NEW GESTURE BUT NOT INDICATION OF NEW POLICY." IT
CLAIMED THE PROPOSALS OUTLINED CONFLICTED WITH ARAB (NOT THE
ISRAELI) POINT OF VIEW AND ARGUED THAT ARMISTICE LINES
EXISTING BEFORE 1967 WAR DID NOT ENJOY LEGAL STATUS. IT STATED
THAT ISRAEL HAD THREE TIMES ENCROACHED ON ARAB TERRITORY FROM
WITHIN THOSE LINES. EDITORIAL ATTACKED PROPOSALS ON BASIS
THAT THEY WOULD ENCROACH ONLY ON ARAB SOVEREIGNTY I.E.,

STATIONING OF INTERNATIONAL FORCES OR MONITORING STATIONS
ON ARAB TERRITORY).

6. PRIOR TO PUBLICATION THESE TWO EDITORIALS, COMMENTARY
NOT OVERLY HOSTILE TO ENTIRE PACKAGE OF STATEMENTS
COVERING ISSUE. EARLIEST EDITORIAL APPEARED IN TISHRIIN (DAMASCUS
1689) AND NOTED RECENT US DECISIONS ARABS HAD REGARDED AS
POSITIVE (I.E., CANCELLATION CONCUSSION BOMB AGREEMENT,
BOYCOTT IMPOSED ON KFIR SALES AND SUPPORT FOR EGYPTIAN
OIL EXPLORATION IN GULF OF SUEZ) AND EXPRESSED ARAB
READINESS TO DEAL WITH NEW US ADMINISTRATION. IT WAS
RATHER NON-COMMITTAL ON PROPOSALS, MERELY NOTING THAT
"SOME STATEMENTS REQUIRING ATTENTION HAVE BEEN ISSUED
DURING RABIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON." ON SAME DAY, THAWRA
ATTACKED CONCEPT OF SECURE BORDERS IN ANALYTICAL COLUMN
ENTITLED, "SECURE BORDERS ARE AN ILLUSION AND DISCUSSION
OF THEM DOES NOT SERVE CAUSE OF PEACE." COLUMN OPENED WITH
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ASSERTION THAT PRES. CARTER'S STATEMENT ABOUT "SECURE
BORDERS" HINDERS SERIOUS MOVES TOWARDS PEACE IN THE AREA.
EDITORIAL ATTACKED CONCEPT AND ISRAEL'S "PRETEXTS AND
JUSTIFICATIONS" TO AVOID PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. TISHRIIN
ALSO PUBLISHED COLUMN MILDLY CRITICAL OF STATEMENTS BUT
NOTED FROM OUTSET THAT ARABS REMAIN READY TO WORK FOR
COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION.

7. SOLE EDITORIAL ON THIS SUBJECT MARCH 16 (TISHRIIN)
BACKED AWAY FROM HARSHNESS PREVIOUS DAY'S COMMENTARIES
ARGUING THAT, "U.S. PRESIDENT'S STANDS ON ME ISSUE BIND
ONLY U.S. NOT ARABS AND DO NOT POSE OBSTACLE TO ARABS
CONTINUING THEIR EFFORTS WITH ALL PARTIES CONCERNED
TOWARD REACHING OVERALL AND JUST SETTLEMENT IN ME. ARABS'
DIALGOUE WITH THIS PARTY OR THAT IN NO WAY BINDS THEM
TO ADOPT ANY VIEW THEY DO NOT DEEM ACCEPTABLE." IT
CONCLUDED THAT ATTAINING JUST SOLUTION RESTS UTIMATELY
WITH ARABS AND CAN BEST BE ACHIEVED BY ARAB UNITY AND
PREPAREDNESS.

8. COMMENT: IT WOULD APPEAR THAT SARG HAD SOME
DIFFICULTY FRAMING ITS INITIAL RESPONSE ON THIS QUESTION.
WHEN PRES. SADAT PUBLICLY LASHED OUT AT DEFENSIBLE
BORDERS CONCEPT, SYRIAN MEDIA FOLLOWED HIS LEAD AND LAUNCHED
SHARPER ATTACKS ON REMARKS, BUT THEN RECONSIDERED. PROBABLE
MOTIVATION IS THAT SYRIA BELIEVES IT MUST HANG TOUGH ON
THIS ISSUE LEST IT APPEAR TO GIVE SOMETHING AWAY BEFORE
NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN. ALL EDITORIALS GENERALLY CONFINED
THEMSELVES TO ARGUING ISSUES RATHER THAN DIRECTLY ATTACKING
CARTER OR U.S. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT ASAD PERSONNALLY REMAINS IN
DAILY CONTACT WITH MININFO ABOUT MEDIA EDITORIAL COMMENTARY AND

DIRECTING MANNER IN WHICH PARTICULARLY NEWSWORTHY ITEMS TO
BE PLAYED.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

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